Head Over Tails by bluevelvets

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King
Genre: Alternate Universe, Alternate Universe - Fantasy, Alternate Universe - Magical Realism, Alternate Universe - Urban Fantasy, F/M, Happy Ending, Internalised Homophobia, M/M, Merman!Eddie, Mutual Pining, Repression, adult losers club, mentions of abuse, no pennywise
Language: English
Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Myra Kaspbrak, Patricia Blum Uris, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris
Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough/Mike Hanlon, Eddie Kaspbrak/Myra Kaspbrak, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Patricia Blum Uris/Stanley Uris
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2019-12-05
Updated: 2019-12-05
Packaged: 2019-12-17 16:53:11
Rating: Not Rated
Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply
Chapters: 1
Words: 3,949
Publisher: archiveofourown.org
Summary:

Eddie and Richie reunite in the wake of Eddie leaving his wife. The two are struggling with their own traumas and their feelings they refuse to recognise and to make matters worse, Eddie discovers he’s a merman.

Head Over Tails

Author's Note:

> Alright y'all bare with me this started as a dumb idea cause I was thinking about Rikki from H2O just add water and now here we are. I'm going to try to finish this but updates will be inconsistent but I want to post this chapter to test the waters since I want to put myself out there to try and be more confident with my writing.
>
> Also no one except myself has read over this I did some spellcheck and fixed some grammar and that's it, I'll subject myself to mistakes.
>
> TW; Mentions of Abuse

"Get out! Get out and don't come back!" Myra wailed, tears streaming down her round cheeks as her blonde hair shook with each movement but Eddie was already reaching for the door knob, holding back his own tears as he left their apartment with nothing but the clothes on his back and whatever was in his bag hanging on his shoulder. As he shut the door behind him, his eyes didn't take a glance at his fiancé but of the fish tank behind her, it's water fluorescent under the lamp lights, the little goldfish inside staring out almost with sympathy and then all he saw was the wood of the door. His insides twisted up like knots as he walks down the hallway towards the lift, was he making a mistake? Could he even function without her?

But he wasn't really functioning was he? Not with her, he was her goldfish, trapped in her limitations of control, confined to that box of an apartment. He didn't even know if he really loved her, it was nice when they first met at an office Christmas party when he was new to the company. She'd cared for him and he'd done his best to care for her in return but her comfort became control and he didn't know how to speak up to her, how to set boundaries. He began to tiptoe around her, trying to keep her appeased and doing her bidding without question. If it was really love, he was afraid that he didn't

want to love again.

“Eddie bear! Wait, please we can fix this! I’ll take care of you, please you’ll get sick if you go out now, I love you!” He looked behind him, expecting to see his mother, expecting to see the old walls of his childhood home but it was Myra, sobbing and standing in the middle of the brightly lit apartment building hallway, the door to the home they had shared for years open. Eddie felt his chest tighten, hands fumbling for his inhaler in his bag as he stared at his mother, no, his wife. He felt sick and he felt himself struggling to breathe, his fingers tightening around his inhaler buried under some clothes. Myra started running towards him, repeating that pet name. She’d heard his mother call him that during her regular phone calls or was it Myra who called daily? Or did they both? He couldn’t tell anymore, it made his head hurt as he breathed in deeply, clinging to the inhaler.

“Oh Eddie, my Eddie, you’re going to make yourself sick, you should know better, please let me help you back inside and we can talk about this, oh Eddie bear!” She cried, now standing beside him and she forcefully placed a hand on his shoulder, squeezing it.

“Don’t fucking touch me, Mom!” Eddie yelled out, his inhaler dropping to the floor as he pushed her hand off him, he felt himself shaking, his hands trembling as he looked up at her. “Myra! Don’t, don’t touch me Myra…”

His brown eyes were wide and wet with fear and tears as his wife, his *wife, stared at him in shock, hands hanging in the air. Eddie picked up his inhaler and ran to the lift, punching the button and running inside as soon as the heavy metal door opened. He couldn’t look at Myra again, his eyes focused on pushing the elevator button to get the doors to just fucking close already. But he felt her eyes bore into him, staring at him until the elevator doors finally shut, the seconds it took felt like an eternity. Eddie didn’t even realise he was sitting on the elevator floor, the hum of the machinery going down to the underground parking was all he could focus on. He squeezed his eyes shut, trying to calm himself as he felt more tears run down his face. The doors opened and he got up, holding onto the railing as he walked out onto the concrete and walked towards his car.*

Myra never wanted him to get his car, it was too big, too dangerous but Eddie insisted, it was his choice, his little victory. The car's lights lit up as he heard the familiar beep, a sign it was unlocked. He climbed in, throwing his bag in the back, carefully placing his inhaler in the glove compartment and then, shutting the heavy car door. For a moment it almost felt like he was just on his way to work but he knew that wasn't true, that everything was going to be different. His nose felt blocked and his throat was dry and parched and Eddie gripped the steering will, laying his head on it. He sat in his car for awhile, trying to hold it together but he couldn't. He started screaming and yelling, tears of anger streaming down his face as he banged on his steering wheel, the car horn blaring until he had no energy left, laying his head back against his seat's headrest and staring at the concrete wall in front of him.

He finally started the car and drove away, not sure of his destination and not sure if he actually cared. With uncharacteristic carelessness, he opened the car window and threw his wedding ring out into traffic. Eddie nearly stopped to go find it among the traffic but he gripped the wheel tighter, refusing to turn back. It was done.

He drove along, the lights of Manhattan flashing at him everywhere, the noises of night life and other cars speeding by him, he felt more alone than ever, just the scared sickly boy who wasn't allowed beyond arm's reach of his mother. A few hours went by of endless driving and bumping into occasional idiots on the road, a name appeared in his head like a neon sign, someone who was always there to pull him out of that hellhole of a home. He didn't even realise his eyes were wet with fresh tears, scared to speak to him after everything. But with a trembling hand, he went through his phone's contacts, heading straight to it like second nature.

He called Richie.

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Richie was asleep on his couch, old empty beer bottles scattered all over the place, the only light in the room was his large television still blaring, the glow of the white light displaying the mess that was his living room. Scattered on the coffee table was his script for his upcoming show, all the material laid out for him but he didn't care to

learn it. Richie's heart wasn't in his work, it wasn't really his, it was someone else's jokes about jerking off to your girlfriend or whatever. The only thing that didn't seem fake about him anymore was when he was finishing another bottle. He didn't know how it started, perhaps he was always inclined to bad coping mechanisms, smoking when he was younger but that didn't stick, liquor did. It put him in a position of forgetfulness and he was a lightweight, it wasn't difficult to forget the worst things about himself.

He was dreaming of a young Ted Danson who was telling him about his dog, a Pomeranian and Richie was floating in the air, unable to do anything but listen, Ted's mouth opened and words stopped coming out and instead the familiar iPhone ringtone started instead. Richie's eyes opened, his vision blurry as his glasses had fallen off his face and onto the floor. He groaned, placing his glasses back on his face as he saw the TV was playing reruns of 'Cheers'. His phone kept ringing but he couldn't find it, he moaned in annoyance as each ring made his head pound. He searched through the rubbish and paper on the coffee table, throwing aside a packet of half eaten chips and seeing his phone, vibrating and lit up. He was going to turn it off but his heart skipped a beat, his hand hovering over the phone as he stared at the caller ID.

Eds.

He shuts the tv off and picks up the phone, the ringing not stopping as he walks over to the glass sliding door, sliding it open and stepping out onto the back deck, nothing but the sounds of waves crashing and that annoying ringtone. He looks down at the phone screen again, inhaling the smell of salt in the air as the bright white light of his phone lit up his surroundings. He stares at his contact photo of Eddie, it was from when he last saw him several years ago, before the fight, he was laughing, his dark hair slicked back, his beautiful chocolate brown eyes lit up with life and his middle finger aimed directly at the camera. It was fine, he assured himself, they were friends since childhood, that's all, sure it'd been a long time but it would be fine, it was fine. He answered the phone.

"Hey Richie, it's Eddie." It was not fine. Richie heard Eddie's voice

and felt bile rise in his throat and the desire to go right back inside and get another drink. But Eddie's voice was pitchy and tired, like he'd been crying and Richie wished he could hold him close in that moment, as a friend, of course. Friends, Eddie was his friend. His friend who he hadn't spoken to in a few years and was calling him up at 10 pm at night. His friend.

"Richie? You there? Look I know it's late and I don't even know why I'm call-"

"No, Eddie you're fine, I was just having sex with your mom. What's up?" Richie rubbed at his eyes as he heard Eddie sigh on the other end of the phone before his laugh echoed through the speaker. But it wasn't his usual laugh, the one that Richie had done all sorts of annoying things to hear, it was bitter and resigned.

"You were right you asshole, you were fucking right. I should have listened to you now I'm driving around the city, I don't know what the fuck I'm doing and she's been calling me all night since I walked out, I can't believe it *I walked out! Me! Bet you never thought that was gonna happen huh, I know it's so fucking funny that you were right so feel free to say I told you so or something." Eddie talked quickly, like he always would when he was angry or nervous, his words blending together as he sniffled and coughed. Richie couldn't open his mouth, he stood on the deck in his crappy t-shirt and boxers as the breeze hit his legs.*

"Richie? Please say something I'm already losing it." The waves crashed down on the shore as Eddie's voice snapped Richie out of his shock. He couldn't process it, was he really saying what Richie thought he was saying? He didn't know if it was really true.

"Eds, shit, I'm so sorry, I wish this wasn't happening." *Liar, a small voice in the back of his head spat at him. Richie pushed it down, trying not to think of the feelings that were trying to bubble up to the surface like a pot of boiling water. "Fuck man, I don't know what to say."*

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have called, I should go-"

“No, Eds, please don’t go. I’m,” Richie paused, normally he could talk endlessly but this was different, it needed delicacy, something Richie didn’t have. “I’m glad you called, even if it’s because of this shitty situation.”

“Never thought I’d say this but god it’s good to hear your voice again, Richie, even if you won’t stop fucking calling me Eds. I’m kinda freaking out Richie, I really don’t know what I’m doing, I threw my fucking wedding ring out the window! I, I left her. It’s over.” His voice cracked and Richie felt his throat tighten, he just wanted to pull Eddie close to him, he hated hearing him like this. *Nothing’s changed, the little voice spoke up once more and Richie flexed his other hand, tensing it into a fist as he spoke. Eddie began to sob once more.*

“Holy shit you threw your wedding ring out the window?” Richie instantly regretted his initial spoken reaction.

“God you’re such an asshole.” Eddie sobbed in response and he imagined his friend rolling his teary brown eyes.

“Eds, hey, hey, it’s okay. Well shit that’s a dumb thing to say but you’ll be okay. Do,” Richie hesitated, afraid to ask. *Beep beep, Richie. “Do you have a place to stay?” His voice was uneven as he blurted the question out, afraid of what he was doing. Eddie staying with him wouldn’t mean anything. He rubbed his eyes, he hadn’t even asked him to stay. But he wanted him to stay.*

“No, not yet, I’ve been driving around the city for a few hours now, just looking, there really is just so many fucking people, I don’t even know what street I’m on anymore, I don’t really care at this point. I should find a hotel or something but god those places are never clean, do you know once I had to stay in a hotel in Chicago and there was fucking semen stains on the pillow? A four star hotel and fucking semen stains on the pillow, Jesus Christ.” Eddie was rambling, interjecting his nervous talk with an occasional awkward laugh, not his real laugh. Richie’s heart was breaking and despite every bone in his body screaming at him not to, that it would be weird, that he

might take it the wrong way, that he would say no, Richie asked him anyway.

“Come stay with me, Eds.” He held his breath, he could hear the waves of the ocean, moonlight shining down on the ripples in the water. He felt his heart pound, he shouldn’t be feeling this way, he was just asking his friend to crash here while he was having a difficult time. Crash at his place across the country. Richie wanted to hit himself in the face, as if Eddie would stay with him, he’s in the Big Apple and he was here, in his secluded beach house, by himself. He waited for him to call him ridiculous, to say no, that he wasn’t gonna come all the way to LA.

“Really?” Eddie’s voice was soft and full of surprise and Richie felt stunned, holding his phone against his ear as he felt the late night breeze against him. Richie didn’t even realise he’d stumbled onto a chair, his mouth hanging ajar. Time felt frozen, all he could hear was the waves and noises from the city on Eddie’s end. Eddie called his name and Richie felt himself snap back to reality, let out a deep breath, not realising he had been holding it.

“Of course, Eds, I’ll buy you a plane ticket, set you up in the guest room. It’ll be nice,” Richie feels uneasy by his own sincerity. “Plus I’m sure you’ll wanna see your mom she’s asleep in my bed.” Eddie laughed, an annoyed laugh but this one was genuine, almost normal. Almost normal was their normal it seemed.

“Shut the fuck up asshole, you’re lucky I’m the only loser willing to hang out with you.” He heard Eddie pause, listening to his shaky breath. “You’re not fucking with me? I know things didn’t end well last time and-“

“I’m not fucking with you Eddie, I,” He stopped himself, mulling over alternative words. “I don’t want my best friend driving around New York City and getting into a car crash, my offer is on the table, plane ticket and a nice room to crash in. I’d be really happy if you took it.”

“God, Richie, I don’t know what to say, fuck.” Richie suddenly heard Eddie’s car horn blare, the sounds of New York suddenly louder and he stood up, his heart skipping a beat. Shit, Richie was panicking, did he just jinx him? He didn’t know what to do, jesus what if something

had happened.

“Eddie? Eddie?!”

“Watch the fucking road you dickhead who the fuck gave you a driver’s license, I’m writing your goddamn number plate down asshole!” Richie felt his whole body relax, flopping back down onto the chair and sighing in relief, a nervous laugh escaping his lips. “Shit, sorry Richie, some fucking asshole in his fancy lambo, swerved out in front of me! Absolutely no regard for safety or the road rules, do you know how many future accidents are waiting to happen because of that man’s incompetency? Fuck.” Richie burst out laughing, rubbing his eyes. That was the Eddie he knew, his Eddie. He hadn’t realised how much he’d missed him or maybe he’d just tried to forget he had.

“So what do you say?” Richie didn’t realise the vulnerability present in his words until he’d already spoken them, his grip on his phone tightening like a vice.

“I don’t know that’s a lot to ask of you Richie and offering to pay for my ticket, fuck, that’s a lot and I-“

“Eddie just say yes.” Richie blurted the words out, cutting off Eddie. He didn’t even mean to say it out loud, it just happened. He was worried he was too forward, that maybe he’d stepped over the line. He was sweating, when did he start sweating? This was just Eddie, it was only Eddie.

“Yeah, that would be great Richie.” Richie could almost see Eddie’s smile, tired and world weary but a warm smile that made his eyes lit up. Eddie was going to be with him, together once again. Richie tensed up at his own thoughts, Eddie was going to crash here, he was helping his friend. His *friend. Richie suddenly felt the urge to throw up, a sickness creeping in his stomach. He wished he knew what was wrong with him.*

“Alright Eddie Spaghetti, I’ll sort out that ticket. Your email still the same?” His voice was shaky as he swallowed the lump in his throat,

he was forcing himself to get it together. Eddie groaned at his nickname, followed by a confirmation of his boring email address and them swapping details for organising everything. He was going to have Eddie here, with him.

“This means a lot to me, I really need this. Thank you Richie.” The tenderness in Eddie’s voice squeezed at his heart, he wished he could reach through the phone and pull him close to him. Richie couldn’t help but imagine Eddie’s head laying against his chest, stroking his hair as they teased each other, Eddie’s skin against his own. He rubbed at his eyes, suddenly feeling as though he was covered in filth.

“Hey, you don’t need to thank me, I’m just helping my best bud out. And be safe on the road, jesus you’re gonna rip some dude’s head off and shit down his neck with your road rage.” Richie chuckled, jumping straight to humour as the moments of sincerity was making his skin crawl.

“Road rage? I don’t have fucking road rage, I’m a safe and responsible driver, Richie-“ Eddie’s car horn beeps loudly, followed by Eddie shouting out his window. “Are you fucking blind? That was a red light dickhead! You could have killed someone, where the fuck are those useless pigs when you need them, for fucks sake!”

“Perfectly safe and responsible driver, got it. No problemo, Eduardo.” Richie was poking fun at him and it hit him how in just one phone call, despite all this time, it felt like they’d last spoken yesterday. He wished it was just yesterday. He heard the waves of the ocean crash down again as Eddie’s voice came through the phone, it was almost like he was one with the waves in that split second.

“Ha ha, asshole. Remind me how you got a job as a comedian again?” Eddie’s beleaguered sigh rings through the phone and Richie stares out at the reflection of the moon floating in the water. There was a moment of silence that felt like it last an eternity before Eddie spoke up once more. “Richie, I’ve missed you, you were the first person I thought to call and I’m so grateful.”

“Aw, Eds, who knew you could be such a sweetie?” Richie was making light, it was the only thing he knew to do. This phone call

was all starting to become too much, like he'd been half numb until now and it was finally hitting him that Eddie was speaking to him, that he was hearing his voice, his groans, his sighs and his laugh. The exhilaration and fear that it would soon be in person was almost overwhelming.

"Shut up, trashmouth. I should go, head to the airport now before I get too tired, I don't want to cause an accident, the paper work would be ridiculous and-"

"I get it, I need to send you that ticket anyway and whose gonna take me out for drinks if you don't catch that flight?" Richie laughed, the carefree laugh he'd perfected for public appearances, one that showed that he was always playful, never too serious, never vulnerable, never honest. He felt guilty using it with Eddie but he didn't want to stop hearing his voice, he didn't want to show how much he cared that this conversation was coming to an end.

"Okay, I'll see you soon. It was, it was great talking to you, man." Eddie's voice has returned to a softer tone, a weariness overtaking him and Richie was reminded of when they were kids, during those evenings in the clubhouse when they'd snuck out of their houses. They would fight over the hammock until they both stayed stubbornly in place and then things would become quieter and Richie would enjoy how close they were, maybe too close.

"Yeah, I'll see you soon. Bye Eds." Richie lowered the phone from his ear, shutting his eyes to numb himself when he heard Eddie's voice and his hand tightly clenched his phone once more, putting it back to his ear.

"Richie?" The way Eddie spoke his name with such vulnerability in that moment made Richie's body tense up.

"Yeah?" It was all he could manage to get out, his brain no longer felt like it worked.

"I, I just wanted to say," There was a long pause or was it only a moment, Richie couldn't tell. His heart pounded heavily, like his most precious organ was attempting to escape the prison of his ribcage. "I, uh, just wanted to say thanks, again."

“Oh yeah, of course, no problem, just make sure not to get in any car accidents, your mum and I are looking forward to having you.” Richie didn’t know what his humour was anymore, if it wasn’t written by someone else, it seemed all he used it for was to be fake some more. He needed to get a grip on himself.

“Hysterical, Richie, fucking hilarious. Alright, I’ll see you soon.”

“Yeah, see ya Eds.” The hang up beep rang in Richie’s ears as he put his phone down, looking out at the waves. He felt himself reeling, now that the call was over, it almost felt surreal, like a dream. He imagined swimming with Eddie in the water, a strand of hair dripping with water falling in front of his forehead as he brushes it away, Eddie only in swim shorts. Richie shut his eyes, pushing the thoughts away with all the force he could muster. He knew better than this, watching the tide come in and out rhythmically.

Eddie couldn’t even swim.

Author's Note:

> Okay, chapter 2 should be coming soon, it’s already half written and yes, merman stuff will happen soon but like,, gotta set it all up,, gotta put all the pieces into place. Anyway I hope you enjoyed, thank you !